

MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS' LIAISON GROUP

TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2013

- Present: Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Ms Anna Lo MBE MLA
Mr Stephen Moutray MLA
Miss Michelle McIlveen MLA
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
Mr Alastair Ross MLA
Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA
- In attendance: Mr Trevor Reaney, Clerk to the Assembly/Director General
Mr Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant
Mr David Lynn, Head of Estates (Agenda Item 4)
Ms Kathy O'Hanlon, Clerk to the Liaison Group
Mr Oliver Bellew, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Mr George McClelland, Clerical Supervisor
Mr Michael Greer, Clerical Supervisor
- Apologies: Mrs Michaela Boyle MLA
Mr Paul Givan MLA
Mr Danny Kinahan MLA

1.04 pm The Chairperson opened the meeting in closed session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 1st October 2013

The minutes of the meeting on 1st October 2013 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

In response to a query from Mr Ross, Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant, clarified the issues raised by chairpersons in relation to why the Commissioner for Standards can investigate complaints against members for their conduct at Committee meetings when complaints about conduct in the Chamber are inadmissible.

1.07pm Mr Nesbitt joined the meeting

4. Update on Disabled Lifts

1.08pm Mr Spratt joined the meeting

David Lynn, Head of Estates, updated members on the progress of the planned maintenance and repair of the disabled lifts within Parliament Buildings.

5. Electronic Committee Packs Update

Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant, updated the group on the roll out of Electronic Committee Packs (ECP) in committees.

Agreed: Members acknowledged the success of the ECP system and agreed to invite a further briefing on progress from the Committee Office. Representatives from the IS Office will also be invited to respond to technical queries and explain the current position in relation to use of the tablet devices.

Agreed: Members also noted guidance on the appropriate use of tablet devices by MLAs and agreed that it would issue to all Members.

1.16pm Mr McGlone joined the meeting

1.24pm Mr Frew left the meeting

6. Strategic Planning

The Group noted a briefing paper by the Clerk Assistant which comprised feedback from Clerks on the strategic planning days that had recently been conducted. Members acknowledged the success of the planning days and the value they brought to each of the committees. Members also suggested that committees should consider holding a review session to assess progress against the objectives which had agreed at the planning days.

1.27pm Mr Moutray left the meeting

1.29pm Miss McIlveen and Mr Ross left the meeting

7. Committee Expenditure

Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant, provided an update on committee expenditure to date for 2013-14.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The group noted the Forward Work Programme

9. Any other business

Confidential documents

There was some discussion around the importance of respecting the protocols surrounding the handling of confidential documents. The Clerk/Director General emphasised the need for collective responsibility within committees in relation to these matters. The Clerk Assistant informed members that staff were currently undergoing training on a revised Information Assurance policy, which will address these issues.

Timeliness of Departmental Responses

Members expressed concern at the lack of punctuality in departmental responses to committee queries.

Agreed: It was agreed that a review of departmental responses to committee requests would be carried out and that the Clerk/Director General would raise this issue directly with the Head of the Civil Service.

10. Date, time and venue of next meeting

The next meeting of the Liaison Group is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 19th November at 1.00pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

1.46pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Robin Swann, Chairperson

19 November 2013